

THE GREEN BOOK



THE POLYMORPHOUS HUMOUR OF
CRAD KILODNEY

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CRAD KILODNEY

Crad Kilodney

CHARNEL HOUSE

Toronto, Canada

Also by Crad Kilodney

Mental Cases (Lowlands Review, 1978)
World Under Anaesthesia (Charnel House, 1979)
Gainfully Employed In Limbo (Charnel House, 1980)
Lightning Struck My Dick (Virgo Press, 1980)
Human Secrets -- Book One (Charnel House, 1981)
Human Secrets -- Book Two (Charnel House, 1982)
Sex Slaves of the Astro-Mutants (Charnel House, 1982)
Terminal Ward (Charnel House, 1983)
Pork College (Coach House Press, 1984)
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The Blue Book (Charnel House, 1985)

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NOTICE

The photograph degrading to women that was to have appeared on this page is not available at this time. All copies of the magazine in which it appeared are in the hands (left hands) of Customs. As a reasonable substitute, we refer the disappointed reader to THE HOLY BIBLE: Judges, Chapter 19.

AN APPEAL TO MY READERS

My friends, I write to you today as a true humanitarian, as a rational thinker, and, above all, as an ordained minister. Every one of you can do something to help make this world a better place to live in.

Now is the time to put to death Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty!

Sink an axe into the back of Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty.

Cut off the arms and legs of Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty.

Shoot Perrin Beatty in the head as soon as you can.

Take a jack handle, sledgehammer, or mace and smash in the face of Canada's Minister of Revenue and Customs.

Run over Perrin Beatty.

Push him in the path of a truck or streetcar.

Tie Mr. Beatty to a tree during a thunderstorm.

Throw sulfuric acid in the face of the Minister of Revenue.

Push Perrin Beatty off a bridge, cliff, balcony, subway platform, or rim of an active volcano.

Push him down an elevator shaft.

Throw him into the crocodile pit at the zoo.

Tell him that a poisonous snake is a non-poisonous one.

Lie in wait for Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty and strangle him with piano wire.

Put cyanide crystals in the cigar of Perrin Beatty, Minister of Revenue and Customs.

Put arsenic in his gin; feed him botulin-contaminated mushrooms.

Give an incurable disease to Mr. Perrin Beatty, Minister of Revenue.

Tie weights to the Hon. Perrin Beatty and drop him into the ocean.

Hire a hit man for the Revenue Minister.

Connect dynamite to the ignition switch of an automobile owned by the Minister of Revenue and Customs, Perrin Beatty.

Burn down Perrin Beatty's house.

Release chlorine gas into Perrin Beatty's bedroom.

Place plutonium in the bottom drawer of his desk.

Drop an anvil on Mr. Beatty as he walks below your window.

Train Doberman pinschers to tear him to pieces.

Put his head in a vise and crush it.

Lock him in a freezer.

Throw Canadian Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty into shark-infested waters.

Tip a radio or hair dryer into his bathtub as he bathes.

Place a gila monster in his pajamas.

Cut out Perrin Beatty's heart.

Crucify Perrin Beatty.

Fire a crossbow into the abdomen of the Revenue Minister.

Derail a train, sabotage a plane, or sink a ship carrying the Hon. Perrin Beatty, Minister of Revenue.

Deny assistance to Perrin Beatty if you find him stuck in quicksand, caught in a bear trap, or dying of thirst or starvation.

Have juvenile delinquents beat the Revenue Minister to death in a dark alley.

Hang, guillotine, or draw and quarter Revenue Minister Perrin Beatty.

Wall up Perrin Beatty in your basement.

Hire a ventriloquist to walk behind him in Harlem and speak unkindly of blacks.

Accuse him of adultery, drug smuggling, or blasphemy in Iran.

Pay an Indian to leave him in the woods.

My friends, do not allow laziness or lack of opportunity to prevent you from causing the death of Mr. Perrin Beatty, Minister of Revenue and Customs. Now, more than ever before, society cries out for relief. Do your part today -- *this very hour* -- so that our children, grandchildren, dogs, and cats may live in a saner, healthier, and happier world.



SECRETS OF THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

Here at the corner of Bay and King the world presents its most normal, most solid look. Are not people dressed in the neatest and most conservative clothes? Do they not appear to be moving with purpose -- that is to say, briskly and in straight lines? Look at these tall buildings all around us. Do they not reassure you by their size alone? On the northwest corner, for example, we have the Bank of Montreal and First Canadian Place; on the northeast corner we have the Bank of Nova Scotia (soon to be replaced by an even bigger and more majestic edifice); on the southeast corner we have the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce; on the southwest corner we have the Toronto-Dominion Bank and the Royal Trust Tower. And within a very short distance we have the Royal Bank's twin towers, the Montreal Trust Tower, National Trust, Sterling Trust, Canada Permanent Trust, several other banks and trust companies, and several major insurance companies, while beneath our feet is a network of interconnected shopping centres stretching from Union Station to the Four Seasons Sheraton Hotel. Surely, this is not the place to look for malignancies of human behavior, or is it? If your faith is a fragile thing that you must keep to sustain you, take leave of your Omniscient Narrator now and stop reading. Otherwise, let me take you by the hand and reveal your fellow man to you in a new light. I will speak to you plainly, but don't worry about my being overheard. I am both inaudible and invisible to everyone but you.

Where shall we start? Any preference? All right, leave it to me. Let's start with this young chap in the brown suit walking north on Bay. He's in a hurry because he doesn't want to be late for a job interview in the Northern Ontario Building. That old attache' case of his has a lock that is about ready to give way with the next good jolt. When he arrives for his interview he will accidentally bump the case against the desk, the case will pop open, and out of it will fall a hard-core gay magazine called *Hot Cowboy Meat*.

The brown-suited chap is just now passing this seedy panhandler in front of the Province of Ontario Savings Bank.

He looks like a demented jockey. One look at his eyes is enough to convince you that he is insane. Step over here and watch this guy without being too obvious about it. See him pacing back and forth like a caged tiger, pestering people for money. But he has another strange habit. Did you see that? He just pitched a coin onto the sidewalk. It's a weird game he plays with the public, enticing them to bend down and pick up a nickel or dime. Look. That old lady picked up the nickel and gave it to him, and he immediately flipped it back onto the sidewalk. She goes away, astounded. Here comes an old geezer in a straw hat. He's worth about three million, but he's got to stop and pick up that nickel. He's got a bad back, so watch what happens. He can't straighten up. A girl has to help him. You find this panhandler amusing, eh? He has a knife with a five-inch blade in his inside pocket. A black fellow walks by, and the panhandler imagines that he has given him a dirty look, so he starts shouting obscenities. People are staring in amazement. Now he's caught you looking at him, and he's shouting at you, so let's move along, shall we?

A man across the street in front of The Xerox Store has also paused because he thought the panhandler was shouting at him, but he wasn't. This man looks perfectly normal -- blue suit, glasses, in his late forties. He works for Bell Canada on Adelaide St. By day he is a...well, let's not give his title. It's a respectable job in management. By night he cruises the Yonge St. Strip. He's been having what he calls a "serious relationship" with a black prostitute for the past three months and has so far spent about \$40,000 on her -- much of it stolen. Not the smartest behavior for a guy with a Master's Degree. The prostitute, who often hangs out near what used to be the Biltmore Theatre, is planning to break things off in the near future, and our Bell Canada exec is going to beat her to death with a hammer.

On his way up Bay, the man from Bell is going to pass a sloppy-looking character about sixty years old who is standing in front of Friedberg & Co., the foreign currency dealers. He likes to read the exchange rates every day, even though he has little savings and no income except a pension from the Longshoremen's Union. Next week he's going to New York, ostensibly to visit his daughter, and while there he's going to bid on a merchant ship. That's right. He's going

to walk into a U.S. Marshal's office during the auction of a merchant ship called the *Athena* at the precise moment that the Morgan Guaranty Trust Company bids \$1.25 million and knocks out the only other bidder. Our old longshoreman, unshaven and dressed in the same old jeans he has on now, will calmly bid \$1.4 million, causing the men from Morgan Guaranty Trust to practically fall out of their chairs. When they have collected their breaths, they will raise the bid, he will raise it again, they will raise it to \$1.65 million, and he will say, "Okay, it's yours," and walk out.

Passing the longshoreman now, going north, is a plump, young woman in her thirties in an olive-green suit. Notice her stiff, nervous walk. She's especially nervous today because she has called in sick (fifth time in the past month) and is afraid she might be seen by someone she knows. But as she works way up at Bloor and Yonge, that isn't likely. She's out doing a bit of shopping to get her mind off things and will then go to the liquor store. This woman has worn the same olive-green suit to work almost every day for the past year. All she needs is a bit of trim on the shoulders and lapels and she'd look like an officer in some East European army. It fits in with her garrison mentality. For nearly six months she has occupied an office at the Workmen's Compensation Board and has done virtually nothing. Her door is locked, and she is always alone. She is supposed to be "facilitating communications" between various departments but will neither accept nor relay any request or information that isn't typed as an official memo. And as for the official memos, she shoves them all into a locked drawer anyway, and nobody is the wiser. You can get away with such behavior in a huge bureaucracy like the W.C.B. for quite a while but not forever. The internal auditors are going to sniff her out next week, and when they do, she will go into the washroom and cut her wrists. If it happens on Wednesday, she'll die; any other day and they'll save her. Don't ask me to explain. There are some things you just have to accept on my say-so.

Ms Olive-Green Suit steps into Grand & Toy, and a fellow in a charcoal grey suit passes her on the way out. Another perfectly ordinary-looking guy, there's nothing about his appearance to make him stand out. (Indeed, a well-known industrial psychologist has written that the secret of "dress-

ing for success" is to "make the best possible impression without setting yourself apart from your peers.") This man runs a small marketing company in the old Canadian Pacific Building at King and Yonge. Although there is another Grand & Toy closer to his office, he believes this one is the better one to be seen in. He is carrying a box of file folders because he has a mania for collecting information. He is always telling his girl, Sandra, to "open a file" on this or that. He wants to keep track of everything. He is constantly preaching about "maximum awareness." Yet, when he walked by a bank on Yonge St. last week, he failed to see that it was being robbed. He even glanced in casually and caught sight of patrons crouching on the floor and a teller shoving stacks of money across the counter to a man in a raincoat with his right hand poised ominously inside the pocket, but somehow it didn't click in his mind and he kept on walking. Even when a police car went by a minute later with its siren blaring, he didn't think anything of it. That day he opened files on Afghanistan, semi-conductors, military magazines, ice cream companies, Italian soccer teams, calendar reform, Michael Jackson, quotations by Albert Einstein, and the industrial uses of rare earths.

Mr. Awareness stops to buy a newspaper from a vending box. A tall, mature gent has bought one and now walks away stiffly, his posture very erect, his umbrella touching the sidewalk in precise rhythm with his footsteps. He is one of the top men in an employment agency that goes in for what is termed "head-hunting." This gentleman is dressed in very fine clothes, from his hat to his shoes. He is also wearing a pair of ladies' panties, garter belt, and stockings. It's a fetish he's had for many years, but he can deal with it.

At Richmond St., the man with the fetish crosses against a yellow light, thus delaying a westbound motorist who is anxious to take off on the green light. The motorist is cursing silently over the three-second delay. He is a Member of Provincial Parliament (don't ask which party), and he has left his girlfriend chained up naked in his bedroom closet in a rather painful position. Don't be alarmed. This is one of their favorite games. He knows how long she can last, and the object of the game is to arrive home as close as possible to her limit of endurance. The door is open just a crack for a minimal amount of ventilation, and she has a wet sponge to

suck on. This man is considered to be an excellent MPP and an authority on welfare policy.

As we turn west on Richmond St., we notice a demure young lady in a navy blue dress going into Fisherman's Wharf with one of her co-workers, a fat girl with bad skin. They work for the North American Life Assurance Company. The demure one has a reputation as the office prude. She acts shocked when she hears a profane word. All her blouses and dresses button in the back; her hemlines always fall below the knees, she wears no make-up, and she wears her hair in the most conservative styles. This girl is only capable of having sex with men who have big feet -- at least size eleven. For the past three years she has been having an affair with her first cousin. They are both active members of The People's Church in Willowdale. The other girl, the fat one with the bad skin, is of no interest.

Coming out of Fisherman's Wharf is a Crown Attorney who isn't all that interesting either, except that a picture of his anus is in a medical textbook.

We're going to turn south on a little street called Sheppard St. and come back down to Adelaide. The Christian Science Reading Room is right at the corner, but I don't think you want to go in, do you? Neither do I. You might take a look at the man inside reading, however -- the little guy with the black hair and glasses and an old sport shirt hanging half out of his pants. He was recently fired for getting into a loud argument with his superior at the city's Public Works Department. He accused his superior of being part of a "conspiracy" that controls people's minds by means of secret devices in traffic lights. He is now reading the Bible to find the proof he needs so that he can march into the Mayor's office and demand his old job back and get his superior fired.

Directly across the street you'll notice a young fellow in a light grey suit with a salesman's sample case talking at a pay phone. He is talking very close into the mouthpiece with one hand cupped around it, and he is looking around to make sure no one is within earshot, so let's keep our distance. This poor chap has just come back from his first sales trip as a rookie salesman of computer software and peripheral products. The trip was such a disaster that he is afraid to go back to the office, so he is disguising his voice and

making a phony bomb threat to his company as a diversion. He hopes that when he finally walks in, the place will be in too much turmoil for anyone to give a damn about his sales trip.

Let's just walk over to York and Adelaide and admire the Continental Bank Building. Which do you like better -- this one or the National Bank Building across the street? I prefer the Continental Bank. Perhaps I prefer to identify with an entire continent rather than just a nation. Or perhaps it's just the look of the building -- recognizably bank-like yet handsome in an unpretentious way. I like their logo, too. Anyway, here comes a courier out of the Continental Bank carrying an envelope whose contents, if made public now, would severely damage the Brazilian *cruzeiro*, which is already in bad enough shape considering that Brazil has the highest foreign debt in the world. The proverbial shit will hit the fan in the summer of '85.

The courier himself, like many couriers in the financial district, is an *artiste*. He is an aspiring musician and song writer. At present he leads a New Wave band called The Retarded Idiots. One of his song lyrics goes, in part, like this:

*I know my life has meaning
When I stand in front of a building
I know my life has meaning
When I stand in front of a building
Stand in front of a building
Stand in front of a building*

*I spit upon the sidewalk
To give my life some meaning
I spit upon the sidewalk
When I stand in front of a building
Stand in front of a building
Stand in front of a building*

Don't laugh. In two years The Retarded Idiots will be the hottest band in Canada.

The courier crosses the street with his bike and stops to buy a cold drink from the hot dog vendor in front of the new Toronto Stock Exchange. The vendor has \$68,000 in a bank account, and his will stipulates that the money should go to

Jesus Christ if the Second Coming happens by the end of the century. Jesus gets the interest, too.

The middle-aged man with the porky face and the green checked jacket who is buying a hot dog from the vendor is on the verge of a senile breakdown. See how he giggles stupidly as he examines his change and makes some comment to the vendor about looking for rare coins. Since returning from India, where he lost all his money on a phony hospital project for lepers run by a charlatan doctor who saw him coming, he has been trying to make money by selling an original seminar course to corporations. The course is supposed to be inspirational and "humanistic," and it is intended for middle and upper management. He has found no clients yet, but he has been persuaded to give a free "get-acquainted" lecture to the executives of a new company in the field of satellite communications. The opening statement of his lecture will be: "Oral communications involve speech between persons." Half-way through his talk, he will go wacko, like Humphrey Bogart at the court martial in *The Caine Mutiny*, mumble something about elephants and his mother, collapse, and wake up in the Toronto General Hospital an hour later. From there he will go to the Clarke Institute for a short while, then to his daughter's home in Peterborough, where he will spend the rest of his life watching children's programs on TV, talking to the furniture, and building "bird cages" that are absurd and useless.

When this man throws his napkin on the ground absent-mindedly, it is picked up by a severe-looking man in a grey suit and steel-rimmed glasses whose hair is parted in the middle. You don't see hair parted in the middle very often these days, but his father wore his hair that way, and if it was good enough for his father, it's good enough for him. He hates litter and gives the litterbug a scowl of contempt, which goes unnoticed. He puts the napkin in a waste receptacle and walks into the Exchange building with a very erect gait, head up, expression suitably serious, as if he bore the responsibility for the well-being and orderliness of the entire building and everyone in it. This man perceives himself as the last bastion of decency in our sick society. He is the kind of Conservative that is always capitalized and modified by the adjective "staunch." A widower, he developed a peculiar urge after the death of his wife, however.

He would frequently ejaculate onto his food and eat it. His daughter was thirteen at the time, and he also ejaculated into her food without her knowledge and got a furious erection while watching her eat it. She is now seventeen, and he can still get away with it. He compensates for this habit by being extremely strict about whom she dates. This man is a financial analyst and works in the Exchange Tower, so we will let him go to his elevator while we go into the lobby of the Exchange itself and up to the visitors' gallery overlooking the floor.

There are a few visitors in the gallery, but they're not worthy of much attention. The two tourists from Ohio are having marital problems and aren't saying a word to each other. When he gets up the nerve, he's going to take her to a "dirty movie" at the Cinema 2000, but, as you know, he'll be wasting his money on a lousy, heavily censored movie, and they'll end up feeling even more alienated from each other than they do now.

The security guard, whom we shall call Rusty because of his hair, is a nervous guy in his fifties. He's dying for a cigarette but can't smoke on duty. He has suffered from bad nerves and insomnia ever since an incident that happened to him in the Korean War. His company was about to be shelled by enemy mortars, and before the first shells hit, a soldier yelled out, "Incoming!" Rusty saw two foxholes in front of him, about twelve feet apart, and he could have dived into either. Arbitrarily, he dove into the one on the right. About five soldiers took shelter in each. Seconds later, the left foxhole took a direct hit and killed everyone in it. Rusty's best friend took the shell right on the helmet, and his head literally disappeared.

Looking down on the floor, we notice a smiling man in a light blue blazer throwing a wad of paper at a co-worker as a joke. He's in a particularly good mood because he has heard unofficially that he's getting the promotion in his brokerage firm that he's had his mind on for a long time. This means that he beat the polygraph test last week. (Yes, it *is* possible.) This man buys sex from teenage boys and is a frequent user of cocaine, hash oil, and amphetamines.

I perceive that you have developed a thirst, so let us repair to Sammy's Own Exchange, a popular drinking spot downstairs in the underground mall.

Here we are at Sammy's. Note the bull's and bear's heads by the entrance. Get it? Let's sit over here. You're having a double whisky, are you? Feel free. Myself, I'm incorporeal, so it would do me no good. Take a look at those two ladies in their early forties drinking Manhattans and smoking cigarettes. Both these ladies are having problems with their mothers. The lady with the silver-blond hair and too much eye shadow is very tired because she was up all night with her demented mother, who was baying at the moon. "The moon! The moon!" she kept repeating between her howls. The lady with the thin face and auburn hair has to shop for a birthday present for her mother this afternoon and will suffer a hysterical fit of crying in the lingerie department of Simpsons when she suddenly realizes that she has hated her mother all her life.

Did you enjoy your drink? I hope so, although you do seem a bit upset, if I may say so. Never mind, we're almost finished.

Let's walk through the mall toward First Canadian Place. Here's the food area, and there's a beautiful but very skinny girl looking at the fruit at The Kitchen Table. She's a sales clerk in a cosmetics store in one of the underground malls. She is 5'5" and weighs 90 pounds, but she still wants to lose more weight. She is allowing herself a single piece of fruit and is trying to decide which kind of fruit has the fewest calories. An apple, yes, but what *kind* of apple? This girl, despite her beauty, has not had sexual intercourse for five years. Whenever a sexual thought enters her mind, she begins to sneeze, although she hasn't made the connection. She has spent a small fortune on over-the-counter medicines for her "allergy" but has more recently gotten into herb teas and other natural cures. Now she is convinced that she suffers from some kind of cold, not an allergy, because she had a bad sneezing attack yesterday after a thunderstorm when it got chilly. A handsome man offered her his umbrella as they got off the bus in the pouring rain. She's leaving the fruit stand. She's decided to save the calories and not even buy an apple.

Let's go back up to the street and walk over to Bay and head south.

Here by the old Toronto Stock Exchange we find a knot of young, upwardly mobile corporation men who have stopped

to observe an illegally parked car being towed away from the front of Commerce Court West. Don't they look happy? This is the high point of their day. These young men are all college graduates and earn at least \$30,000 a year. They own an average of 8.1 suits and 1.6 televisions, drink the average equivalent of 59.5 ounces of hard liquor per week, eat out an average of 9.9 times a week, and have an average of 10.0 credit cards. They have read an average of 0.2 works of *real literature* (not Stephen King!) in the past six months.

The bag lady walking by on the opposite side of the street takes no interest at all in the car being towed away. She's more concerned about what doorway she's going to sleep in tonight. You will note that despite her poor clothing she carries herself with a certain dignity, and her face has a look of refinement, rather like a noblewoman who has been dispossessed by a mob of revolutionaries. She is originally from Hungary and speaks fluent English, Hungarian, French, Spanish, Italian, Romanian, and Russian. She used to teach piano in Montreal. In her bag is a notebook of original piano sonatas.

Let's continue south and follow the lady in the indigo suit wearing dark glasses (although this is the shady side of the street). She has just picked up a plane ticket (one-way) at the KLM office at Bay and Adelaide. She is on her way back to her office in the Royal Bank Tower (the south one). This woman has a very high I.Q. but was recently passed over for promotion because of her sex. Next week she is going to pull off the biggest embezzlement in the history of the Royal Bank. She will accomplish this by means of a computer transfer of funds from Canada to her secret Swiss bank account on the day before she goes away on vacation. Because of my respect for banking institutions, I will not reveal how she will circumvent the usual safeguards of the system. It's a method that will work once only, after which the Royal Bank will know better. Of course, this lady will never be seen in Canada again. (By the way, the secret password for the Royal Bank's computer is "Swordfish," but don't tell anyone who told you.)

As our future embezzler goes into the Royal Bank, we will leave her and follow this elderly gentleman whom I have dubbed "Fish Face" because he reminds me of a fish -- espec-

ially the mouth. You will never see this man with anyone else. No one will even have lunch with him. He never smiles or takes notice of anything to his left or right. He looks straight ahead and walks straight ahead. He has never given so much as a penny to a panhandler in his entire life. He is a senior vice-president of one of the major banks. A repressed homosexual, he still suffers shame over an incident that happened to him in the navy many years ago. While in Barcelona, he got drunk and let himself get picked up by a suave, young hustler and ended up getting beaten and robbed. His greatest regret in life is that he could not find the hustler later in order to kill him. Fish Face has become more and more misanthropic, moralistic, and rigid over the years, so much so that his two children left home as soon as they were able to. His son eventually committed suicide by driving off a cliff in Hawaii, and his daughter is a prostitute in Boston. Fish Face is still married, and although he doesn't love his wife, he is proud of how clean she keeps the house.

Oh! I see by your countenance that you are not feeling well. What's that? You feel "shaken"? I'm so sorry to have upset you. Perhaps you should take in a movie tonight -- a funny one. Or perhaps read a funny book with no upsetting characters or situations. There's a splendid musical comedy playing at the Variety Dinner Theatre, which I'm told hasn't a serious idea or line in it. There, there, my friend, buck up! Treat yourself to a good dinner and a few drinks and forget about everything!

Well, I can see by your watch that the hour is late for me. I have an urgent appointment and am needed in another story in New York in less than five minutes. And so it is here that I, your Omniscient Narrator, shake your hand and take my leave of you.

SELECTED POTATOES

Ladies and gentlemen of the modern world, you who travel under the earth in tubes or ride complacently in great motor cars or sit within the comfort of your living rooms and watch television, you who trust that the sun shall set tonight and rise tomorrow, you who command complex machinery with the touch of a switch, you who write marks on papers and send them hither and yon in the name of Business, you who read newspapers and possess diplomas from accredited secondary schools and colleges, you who buy life insurance and subscribe to the *Reader's Digest* and other compendia of monotony, you for whom there is no Mystery left in Life: think now upon the Potato. Go to your kitchen cupboard or into your cellar and look closely at your bag of potatoes, or your box of instant mashed potatoes, or your bag of potato chips. Look for the words "Selected Potatoes," or perhaps "Choice Potatoes," and wonder to yourselves: How came these potatoes to be selected? By what miraculous human wisdom were these potatoes set apart from all others?

Behold, I explicate a Mystery kept secret since before your life began.

The sun shone bright on a Monday morning, as pretty a Monday morning as ever the industrious worker, clerk, agriculturist, or mere author of words might wish to see. In a three-storey warehouse such as those you pass every day without giving a thought to what might be transpiring therein, a momentous occasion was taking place -- the birth of a new potato company, the Immortal Potato Company.

The President of this new enterprise, Major Theobald, a former cavalry officer, stood in the conference room at the head of the long table. Sitting before him were his Directors, all men of good breeding whom he had hand-picked, for Major Theobald was a Selector of Men, if not of potatoes. They eagerly awaited this inaugural and surely most historic address from their President.

"Gentlemen," he began, "today begins what we all hope shall be the magnificent and profitable life of the Immortal

Potato Company. Shall we build it upon a foundation of clay, so that it might come tumbling down at any moment and cover its builders in the rubble of ignominy?"

"No! No!" they replied as one.

"Or shall we build it upon a foundation of concrete and steel, that our edifice endure throughout the ages and shine forth like a beacon over the sea of human uncertainty?"

"Yes! Yes!" they replied with one voice.

"Oh, what a mistake it would be to follow the disastrous course of certain other potato companies, whose names shall not be mentioned within these walls, names that have become equated with all that is iniquitous, tawdry, and ephemeral in the domain of human enterprise. Breathes there a housewife who does not utter those names with bitterness, in the memory of sad experience with potatoes which have not been judiciously selected but have instead been offered in commerce as...*mere potatoes*?" He shook his head sadly, eyes downcast for a moment. "My friends, who among you relishes the prospect of going to his grave with the final conscious thought that he has had a hand in the vending of mere potatoes which have not been selected? Would any of you bequeath such a disgrace to your children and grandchildren? No, do not answer! I read the answer in your eyes.

"My friends, as surely as Sin is punished, the world eventually but unfailingly metes out its cruel but righteous Judgment on those companies which do not select their potatoes but leave them on the doorstep, as it were, and run away like thieves in the night to count their petty and ill-gotten profits. And, therefore, I say to you, my Directors, my comrades, that before we do any one thing, before we dare look into the mirror and call ourselves Men of Business and Merchants of the Immortal Potato, we must first seek out and hire forthwith and without delay a Potato Selector, a professional person of knowledge and expertise, a man who would know both by instinct and by learned science how to select our potatoes. We would pay him any sum he might ask, even if it meant becoming the debtors of one of the large banking establishments and remaining so for a very long period of time. Does any man among you disagree?"

"No! No!" cried one of the Directors, a man named Schultz, whom Major Theobald knew well from the cavalry -- a man who had been wounded too many times to number in the

valiant defense of a rural post office. "We must indeed have a Potato Selector. But how are we to judge a candidate for such an important post? What would be his qualifications?"

"My very thoughts, noble Schultz," said Major Theobald. "Let us pause and think upon it for a moment."

A silence fell over them as each man's hand (either right or left) moved pensively to his chin and slowly rubbed it or pulled upon the beard with a force calculated to stimulate the circulation of blood to the parts of the brain governing the highest abstractions of thought, as well as the most linear pragmatism. This period of silent cogitation lasted perhaps a minute or more.

Finally, Rudolph spoke up. "He should be a tall man. Height makes a good impression. It inspires confidence and implies leadership and success." There were mumblings of agreement.

Then Von Kleist spoke. "But not *too* tall. For if he is too tall, he may hurt his back when bending over to inspect the potatoes. He should be sufficiently short so as to be close to them already. In fact, I would say that he should have a tallness that carries a certain quality of shortness." The other Directors applauded.

Then another of them, Walbrodt, spoke up. "He should have maturity, for with maturity comes wisdom."

"Yes, indeed," said the Major, who was himself mature.

"But, of course, he will have to be rather young," said Kepler, "for we will certainly want him to live a very long time." The group endorsed this view with words of affirmation.

"What else?" asked the Major. "Farquahr, what is your opinion?"

The mild-mannered but nonetheless decisive Farquahr responded, "He should be clean about his person. Well-groomed. His pants should be pressed and his shoes should be shined. He must present a good appearance to the public."

"Is he to be seen by the public?" asked Gustavson.

"No. Nevertheless, a good appearance is essential for a man of his position."

"Quite so," the Major agreed. "Anything else? Come, gentlemen, do not be shy. Much is at stake. Speak up."

"Well," said Dobrinsky, "forgive me for mentioning it. It may not be relevant, but the thought had occurred to

me..."

"Yes, yes, out with it," said the Major.

"Well..." Dobrinsky looked around at his colleagues.

"The man should know his potatoes. How to pick them. How to know the good ones from the bad ones, as it were."

"Hear! Hear!" they all said, slapping or banging the table in approval.

"I have a question," said Humboldt, a retired Professor of Philosophy, whose position had been accidentally terminated by the complete destruction of his college at the hands of an arsonist and former pupil.

"Please share it with us, good Humboldt," said the Major.

"Should he have his own potato selecting cane? Or are we to supply him with one?"

"Hmm," said Major Theobald, suddenly plunged into doubt, as were all the others. "We would not like to risk offending the man by such an oversight, would we?"

"No, no," said the Directors.

"But, on the other hand," he went on, tapping his index finger upon the scar on his chin he had received in a duel of swords at the age of nineteen. "On the other hand, it would seem to me that if he were a true professional, he would already have his own potato selecting cane, custom-made perhaps for his own hand and height and length of arm and so forth. Does not the physician carry his own stethoscope? Does not the blacksmith work with his own anvil? Does not the sailor carry his own sextant?"

"A good sailor could use any sextant," said Brébert, injecting a shrill note of contradiction, which caught the Major off guard and seemed to embarrass the others.

"Ahem, in any case, I am quite sure, for I have heard tell of it by acquaintances and read of it in the socially correct periodicals, that the Potato Selector prefers his own cane. And even if my memory deceives me in this respect, it stands to reason that if he is a true professional, he will already have one. Indeed, we might justifiably be suspicious of any candidate who presented himself for employment without his own cane. Why, he could be any sort of charlatan or scoundrel who might be clever enough to deceive us long enough to ruin our good names."

"Yes, yes," said the others, except for Brébert, who

sat in a somewhat collapsed state, realizing his *faux pas* and now hoping to atone for it with an air of total submission and silence.

The Major looked at his Directors each in turn, first clockwise, then counter-clockwise. "I fear to ask it, but does any one among you know of a Potato Selector whose services we might call upon and whom we could welcome to our bosom in a bond of everlasting trust?"

They shook their heads to say no, which did not surprise Major Theobald, as he was well aware not only of the extreme scarcity of practitioners of the art of potato selection but also of the probability, approaching zero, that a qualified candidate would at any given moment be unemployed and in search of a position.

"We could place an advertisement in the *Daily Enttäuschung*," suggested Rudolph.

"Such would be expedient if our need were not so pressing, but in truth we require someone today -- immediately, if not sooner," replied Major Theobald. "No, we cannot waste even one precious second. Gentlemen, I propose to telephone at once the Central Employment Bureau and ascertain whether they have within their vast files a qualified candidate." This suggestion was greeted with comments of approval all around.

The Major picked up the telephone before him and asked the switchboard operator on the floor below to ring up the Central Employment Bureau. All eyes and ears waited with tense anticipation. The Major's eyes looked upward, as if in a silent prayer to the Lord.

"Hello? Kindly put me through to the Director himself, for no other personage can appreciate the gravity of my appeal. If he is in conference, I beg you to inform him of a call of the most urgent nature. If he is at tea, all the better, as the consumption of a finely brewed cup of tea, along with a dainty sweetmeat, will doubtless have effected a mood of good humor...Hello?...To whom am I speaking?...Herr Wilhelm? It is Major Theobald, President of the Immortal Potato Company, who importunes you on this fine morning...Why, yes, the very same!...Indeed, praise God! A fellow officer of the Second Dragoons! Oh, what a fine omen!...Major Wilhelm, I call you upon a matter of great consequence, for this very day I have proclaimed and founded the Immortal Potato

Company...Thank you, kind sir! But a cloud of despair hangs above my head and the heads of my colleagues, who at this moment are sitting before me hoping and praying that you will be able to fulfill our most urgent need. We lack the one man without whom we would be but mere stumbling idiots destined for failure. We require a Potato Selector, for as you know, in the matter of potatoes..." And here he stopped speaking and listened with the raptest attention to his interlocutor. Presently, tears of evident joy fell silently from the Major's eyes. He mumbled only "Yes, yes" at odd moments and nodded his head as he listened to the Director of the Central Employment Bureau. "At once, Major Wilhelm! Send him at once!...Yes, goodbye, and God bless you!" He hung up, his hand trembling.

"Tell us, Major Theobald! Pray, do not leave us in suspense! What did he say?" asked Gustavson.

The Major took a kerchief from his breast pocket, the same breast that on national holidays could be observed bearing many medals won in the service of his country, and dabbed at his eyes. "He said...he said...that at this very moment there sits outside his office, alone on a bench, a true and *bona fide* Potato Selector! And that this individual has sat there since Thursday, beneath the portrait of King Ludwig the Second of Bavaria, awaiting an offer of employment, and that his ceaseless repining has plunged the entire Central Employment Bureau into the deepest sorrow, for his pitiable sighs have echoed throughout the halls of that building to stab like hot knives into the tender hearts of its many clerks and officials, not the least of which the Director, the good and kind Major Wilhelm, a beloved brother officer of former days, numbers himself. But now, praise God, his sorrow and ours are at an end, and he comes to us this very hour by the swiftest means available! I am assured that he is a man of integrity, perspicacity, and almost endless knowledge, an apprentice of the great master Zweig himself, and that he has returned after an absence of several years in the British Isles, where his skills have been sharpened to the greatest imaginable degree but where he finally succumbed to homesickness for his and our beloved native land! Truly, Providence has smiled upon us today, has it not?"

"Yes! Yes!" they exclaimed as one.

Then young Weinreich rose to his feet -- unsteadily, for

he was unused to addressing his elders. "Oh, that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, for He has broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder. He turns the fruitful land into a wilderness and back again, that the tillers of the fields might bring forth the potato. He pours His contempt upon the princes and causes them to wander where there is no way. We who sit in darkness, in the shadow of death, we hear the voice from above, and the stormy wind comes forth, the waves are raised up, the mountains are leveled to mere dust. As in the days of Moses, they murmured in their tents and hearkened not, and He overthrew their seeds among the nations, and so the plague was stayed. From His very girdle, wherewith He is girded continually...We are tossed up and down as the locust...His great works...His...His...potatoes...Our souls rejoice...Our souls...I...Forgive me, I've lost my train of thought." And so saying, he sat down and covered his face with his hands and began to weep. His neighbors patted him on the shoulder.

"There, there, good fellow," said Major Theobald. "I'm sure we all comprehend your meaning, and even if not, we salute your eloquence all the same."

Word soon spread throughout the building that the Potato Selector was coming. Each man and woman stood by his and her post -- the baggers with their burlap bags, the labelers with their ink stencils, the clerks with their clipboards, the supervisors with their most officious countenances, the typists with their pretty, new ribbons, and even the lavatory attendant with his scrub brush. Did perhaps a thought of marriage or love flit like a fritillary in the mind of each unmarried girl? The ticking of the great clock in the lobby was but the external counterpart of each heart. A silence marred only by hushed whispers dominated the Immortal Potato Company. O foolish everyday world, that has no inkling of secret drama along the less traveled byroads of the City of Life!

At last there was a knock at the door. The Directors were all waiting to greet the Potato Selector. Major Theobald opened the door, and there stood the magnificent one himself -- he who had been sent! He was a youngish man, yet with an air of maturity -- modern-looking, yet at the same time possessing a certain classicism. One could tell that he was simultaneously of noble and common birth -- that unique

attribute that is found only among the great Potato Selectors. And it should be noted as well that he held a wondrous cane, whose well-worn handle bespoke a long and intimate association with him who held it.

"Good sir! We welcome you!" said Major Theobald.

The man stepped inside, removed his hat, and extended his hand. "My name is Kovich. I am at your eternal service. From this moment on, my destiny is wedded to your own. Your call has come in answer to my silent prayers. My fleeting life, which, I must confess, appeared to have been cast into the abyss by the Fates and forgotten forever, is now lifted up again and bestowed with meaning."

"Oh, good and kind sir! Noble sir! Noble Kovich! In your hands lie the fortunes of a hundred families -- all whose homes and hearths are linked as if by invisible threads to our humble edifice! You have only to name your terms, be it rubies or pearls or the entire contents of our treasury!"

"Please, illustrious sir, do not speak of mundane materialism at this sublime moment of the heart! Do not think that I come to you compelled by thoughts of lucre, but rather by the fulfillment of my human mission. Oh, how my soul thirsts to select potatoes and thereby to disperse the dark clouds of anxiety from above your several brows and open the sky to the Light of Heaven! As for salary, the merest crust of bread, the merest pin money will suffice to sustain my earthly self. Now then, let us repair at once to the potato room, that I may begin to make myself useful."

And with these words, he followed Major Theobald to the third storey, with the Directors following the two of them and remarking among themselves: "Note well his cane, how he handles it!" "He walks like a saint!" "What great secrets of potato-selecting science will he show to us?" "The cut of his suit is quintessential beauty!" "How his shoes shine!" "How he parts his hair!" And so forth.

The solemn procession climbed up the stairs and walked onward toward the main potato room, and Kovich's feet trod upon the petals of rare flowers that had been purchased from a certain florist around the corner minutes before and were now strewn in his path by the ladies of the company.

The doors to the main storeroom lay open, and the staff within stood in their places in rigid attention. Kovich paused just inside the threshold and beheld the great mounds

SELECTED POTATOES

of potatoes that had been carted in from the fields. He walked forward and picked up a potato, then turned and faced the Directors.

"If the potato be damned, it develops misshapenly, or else rots with fungus and invites the corruption of worms and centipedes. If the potato be blessed, it develops into a thing of beauty to gladden the heart of the housewife and nourish the bodies of her family. If it be neither blessed nor damned, it becomes the mere potato, which ought not be selected for the mouth of civilized man but allowed to return to the earth in the hope of greater grace for its future offspring. In this lies the challenge for the Man of Wisdom." He examined the potato in his hand and looked into its eye. "Verily, a Divine Spirit informs this potato." And he gave it to the nearest bagger to be placed into her bag, which had been proudly stenciled to read *Selected Potatoes*.

And he lifted his cane and proceeded slowly among the potatoes, touching each one and declaring "Yea" or "Nay," as the gatherers and baggers worked behind him.

The Directors wept openly in admiration as the great Kovich performed his miraculous work. And all the malignancies of the field and the terrible uncertainties of commerce and human existence were forgotten, and Beauty and Truth reigned throughout the land.

Did you not see the sun tinge the clouds with golden highlights? Did you not hear the songbirds chirping with joy? Did you not perceive the chorus of little angels above the Immortal Potato Company celebrating the miracle that was being worked *for you*? No, you brutish beasts, you earthen clods, you sticks of wood! You sat there stuffing your bellies with potatoes while poring over your silly newspapers, watching your insipid television programs, or prattling through spluttering lips your gossip and opinions and about the banal and plebeian events of your vain and petty lives!

JAP SCIENTOLOGISTS ATE MY GRANDFATHER

(Author's Note: This story was originally intended only for live readings, as the opening suggests, but I am including it here as a last-minute replacement for another story I didn't have the nerve to print dealing with schoolgirls having all their blood sucked out by giant bats.)

Thank you. My next story is called *Jap Scientologists Ate My Grandfather*. I just want to explain before I begin this story that the inspiration for it came when I decided to take a long drive to air my brain out. You know how writers suffer from mental blocks and all that. By the way, this magazine in Alberta -- I forget which one -- sent me a questionnaire asking about writers and writers' blocks and how we coped with them and all that. One of the questions was, if I could describe a writer's block as an object or a living creature, what would it look like? That is, would it have sharp teeth and scare me, or would it do other stuff that they gave as examples, which I forget. Anyway, I answered that writers blocks didn't really exist and that writers just invented the term to create an excuse for not writing. I wonder what they thought of that answer, though I think in Alberta they have some pretty broad-minded editors, at least if my record of publications is any indication. One of these days I'll take a trip to Alberta when I get a grant.

But anyway, to get back to my explanation, I was on this drive to Algonquin Park -- at least, it was in the direction of Algonquin Park. Anyway, I headed north, so at least I was probably within a hundred miles or so of Algonquin Park. The air was really nice and fresh, not like the air in my room, which always smells from tobacco. Not that I object to it. After all, if I objected to it, I wouldn't smoke, although to be honest, sometimes when I come in from the outside and smell it all at once, I realize how strong it is. Plus the fact that I live in a basement and don't get good ventilation, mainly because my landlord, who is a cheap, old Kraut (no offense), keeps the storm windows in nine months of the

year and the screens only three months. It really makes me sad when he puts the storm windows in, but I really shouldn't go into it. I've been in therapy for a while because of it, but never mind.

So, getting back to my explanation, I was on this drive to get rid of an alleged writer's block, although, as I said, I don't believe in that. Really, I wasn't in the mood to write. If I'm not in the mood to write, I don't write. You know what I mean? Like, who's going to give a shit whether I write or don't write, right? No, wait, hold it. I think I'm thinking of the day I left the house because the landlord had the exterminators in to spray for centipedes. I told him nobody sprays for centipedes, but his wife is a real jerk. She sees something crawling and she starts screaming. What a house I live in, I'm telling you. No, on second thought, that wasn't the day I'm thinking of. That was another time.

Maybe before I go on I should explain about my sister, who figures very prominently in *Jap Scientologists Ate My Grandfather*. My sister was a store detective for a few months in a department store. I don't remember which one. It was on Long Island. I assume you know where Long Island is. It's where I grew up, that's where. Anyway, my sister was a very hostile person because of the home environment we grew up in, and I think that led her to become a store detective. That and the fact that her favorite TV program in those days was *Mod Squad*. I think she was jealous of the blonde girl in the show because she was so slim, whereas my sister was always fat. But maybe a fat girl is better than a skinny girl for a store detective. Sounds reasonable. Anyway, my sister tried to apprehend this guy she thought had stolen some jewelry. Actually he had, but get this: the store never prosecuted him. The technicality was that he hadn't actually left the premises, so he wasn't legally guilty. Can you beat that? I think it was really a case of reverse discrimination because the guy was a Negro, and the store was afraid of being labeled racist. They'd had a big demonstration a few weeks prior to that, where all these welfare cases were protesting that the store wouldn't give them credit cards and all that shit, and then the NAACP got on the store's ass, and then they dug up some dirt about the store's policy on promotions. But that's another story, and I don't want to go into it. But I'm just saying, it goes to show you

what this world is turning into. And in case any of you are thinking that I'm prejudiced, all I need mention is the fact that when I worked at Exposition Press, I named the NCCJ -- that's the National Conference of Christians and Jews, for you dumb Pakis out there -- I named them as my beneficiary on the company's life insurance policy. The reason I named them was because I hated everyone in my immediate family at the time. I won't go into the gory details, but I think you'll agree that it's very hard for a creative person to create if he lives at home and hates everybody. This can take years of therapy to work out, believe me.

But to get back to my explanation, my sister grabbed this fucking little spade -- I say *little* because he was shorter than she was, although my sister is taller than average, so a guy who is shorter than she is isn't necessarily below average in height for a man, although in this case I think he was. He wasn't a midget. Let's get that straight at least. As for my sister, she's five-seven, if anyone's interested.

So to explain this point further -- I have to do this or the story won't make any sense otherwise -- my sister grabbed this guy and he turned around and hit her in the face. That is, he turned to *face* her. If he'd turned his back to her, he wouldn't have been able to hit her, now would he? Unless he was double-jointed. And if he was double-jointed, he wouldn't have had to resort to crime to make a living, right? He could have worked in a circus or something. So anyway, to make a long story short, as they say, he hits her in the face, and she falls back, hits her head, goes unconscious, and swallows her tongue. There she is on the floor turning blue. That is, I'm sort of describing how she must have looked. Obviously, I wasn't there. What would I have been doing there, right? No, I was at Exposition Press working. Maybe technically I was across the street having lunch -- that is, across the street from Exposition Press, not across the street from the department store. Anyway, the point is, I wasn't anywhere near the department store. Exposition Press is located -- or was located, I should say -- in Westbury, although I should mention their postal address was Jericho, not Westbury. So to get back to my sister lying unconscious in the store, apparently nobody knew what to do. They just stood around like a bunch of dummies, the way peo-

ple usually do in emergencies. You can thank junky TV shows for that, by the way. At least, that's my theory. I think people just stand around and do nothing because they're waiting for a commercial. A little humor there to offset an otherwise tragic story. Well, almost tragic. Anyway, she died. Technically, I mean. She was technically dead for a couple of minutes. She had no pulse and her brain wasn't working, although I want to say that I haven't noticed any difference in her intelligence after the accident as compared to before. Anyway, so what happened was that the ambulance came -- that is, *an* ambulance came. I don't mean to imply that Long Island has only one ambulance. There's something like six million people on Long Island. Okay, so to get to the point, they revived her in the ambulance, and by the time they got to the hospital, she was perfectly well. One of my grandmothers says that God saved her life. This is not the grandmother who's married to my grandfather in the title of the story I'm going to get into in a moment, it's the other one. Anyway, to get back to my sister, she was so upset by the ordeal that she quit her job and went to work in a pizzeria. Actually, maybe she wouldn't have quit if the store had prosecuted the guy. I think that's what really burned her up. And in that case none of what follows would have happened. Maybe, I don't know. I think about it sometimes. So anyway, it was at this pizzeria that she met her future husband, Tommy, who came from Greece. Tommy, incidentally, is exactly eleven days older than me. He was born on Feb. 2, 1948, and I was born on Feb. 13, 1948. I think that's a really amazing coincidence, even though Tommy and I don't seem to have anything else in common at all. But the upshot of it was that Carol married Tommy, who was one of the chefs in the pizzeria, and they decided they would like to have a business of their own. So they looked around and found this little restaurant in Westbury that was for sale, and they bought it. Well, believe it or not, that was the very same restaurant I used to eat lunch in when I worked at Exposition Press, although at the time they bought it I'd already moved to Canada. So this is the thought that suddenly hit me as I was driving up around Algonquin Park: who would have thought that my sister would someday come back from the dead and buy the restaurant I used to eat lunch in? This may not seem relevant now, but it will when I read the story.

I just want to explain also that originally I had planned to call my story *Turkish Scientologists Ate My Grandfather*, but I decided this was hitting too close to home as my grandfather came from Cyprus and hates the Turks. Although I just want to digress for a moment -- I hope you don't mind -- just to mention this interesting sidelight. Many years ago, when I was about fourteen or fifteen, I was visiting my grandparents, and this salesman came to the door. At first he pretended he wasn't selling anything, just taking a survey on whether or not it would be a good idea to create a huge, cross-referenced index of all the major philosophers and all the important abstract concepts in the world. I agreed it was a good idea, and my grandparents agreed too, even though they had no more than three or four years of schooling in Cyprus. Well, anyway, it turned out that this guy was selling *The Great Books of the Western World*, which just happened to have such an index so that you could look up what any philosopher had to say about any idea or subject. The salesman said it would be great for me in school. So my grandparents ended up buying me *The Great Books of the Western World*, which cost about \$450 at the time. I did use them a bit in high school and university, but I ended up selling them in Toronto for \$200 because I needed the money. I wish I had the bookcase they came in. My sister kept that, even though she never read a book in her life. I didn't want to argue with her over it, considering all that she'd been through. Anyway, what was I getting at? Oh, yeah, this salesman was Turkish, can you beat that? He was going for his Master's Degree in mathematics at Columbia. He even spoke a little Greek to my grandparents. They were very impressed. And he was a very normal-looking fellow, actually rather handsome -- not like a Turk at all.

So you can understand how I didn't want to put "Turkish" in the title because you never know, my grandfather might see the story and not know it was fictional. By the way, I'll tell you who I definitely don't want to see the story -- the Scientologists. I'm serious. I don't want anyone to show the story or repeat it to a Scientologist because you know what'll happen? It'll be curtains for me, I'll tell you that. Whenever any writer takes a shot at Scientology, those guys take it very seriously and try to get even. This is a documented fact. I know of one true case about a magazine

writer who wrote that L. Ron Hubbard was a crook and had body odor, and a few days later some Scientologists put live scorpions in his ski boots. I don't know what happened to him, but I sure don't want to take any chances. So don't under any circumstances tell anyone that I'm opposed to Scientology. And if there are any Scientologists in the audience, I just want to explain that the so-called Jap Scientologists in the story were impostors. They were really Protestants pretending to be Scientologists. I hope I'm not giving too much of the story away in advance, but you have to understand my position and my concern for my safety.

Now, by way of further explanation before I begin, I want to explain that the story is written on three levels -- the symbolic level, the literal level, and the metaphysical level, not necessarily in that order. These levels are interrelated, which is something I've been getting into lately in my stories. I try to experiment, you know, because people don't like to hear the same old kind of stories day in and day out. Anyway, I want you to be on the lookout for certain key words and phrases which indicate the transitions to and from the various levels. I was originally going to do this by means of a change of posture, but I realized that this wouldn't work for people reading the story in a book, and it also wouldn't be fair to any blind people in the audience. Also, depending on where I'm reading, I don't know whether I'm expected to stand or sit. I prefer to stand, if possible. I think most writers do. I like to grip the lectern real hard and really get myself planted, you know what I mean?

Anyway, to continue with this explanation, here are the key words. First of all, I'm going to start on the literal level, because I think that will get us off to a good start and keep people's interest. When you hear the words *hee-gheh soh-ree koo-REE-moo*, then the switch is to the symbolic level. That means "shaving cream," if anyone's interested. The reason for that will become evident. I don't want to explain too much in advance. It would spoil the story. And I happen to think that *Jap Scientologists Ate My Grandfather* will be hailed as one of my best, so I can assure you you're in for a deep emotional experience. By the way, I hope you don't think I intend to read a whole story in Japanese. I don't. The story is in English, but these phrases and words

come up in the dialogue between Kazuo and Albert. In the story they argue a lot about religion. My grandfather talks some, too. Well, he doesn't exactly talk. He sort of shouts some words of shock or surprise when he sees Kazuo and his brothers, Kenji and Zenko, coming after him. Those words are in English because I didn't want to risk creating any misunderstanding at the high point of the story. Okay, so as I said, *hee-gheh soh-ree koo-REE-moo* switches you to the symbolic level. Incidentally, I would be glad to have your comments about this three-level scheme of mine afterwards -- that is, whether it works generally, or which level was your favorite. Okay, so to continue, the word *sen nuki*, which means "bottle opener," is the signal that the story has moved up to the metaphysical level. Up, down, sideways, whatever. When you hear *BOH-shee gah hoh-shee'ee noh dess gah*, we're back on the literal level. That means "I would like a hat," by the way, although that will be obvious from the context of the story. When you hear *ee*, which means "stomach," we're back on the symbolic level. The second switch to the metaphysical level is indicated by the words *Hoh-kah-noh FOH-koo woh moht-teh kee-teh koo-dah-sah'ee*, which means "Please bring me another fork." I know the Jap version sounds pretty long. I don't know how a race of people that makes such good cars can get by with such a clumsy language, but I guess if you're born in Japan you know how. And the story ends back on the literal level -- you know, to give it a sense of wholeness -- and the final switch is this phrase, and if you thought the last one was long, get a load of this one: *Otoko no hito ga watak(u)shi no kaban wo torimash(i)ta*. Guess what all that means? "A man took my bag." Ain't that a pisser? Hell, by the time they get all that out, the guy with the bag is in the next county! I guess maybe they don't have much use for that phrase because Japan has a very low crime rate.

The only other thing I want to explain is the fact of my grandfather being eaten. Although this is a fictional story and not true to life, it's based on a true incident this guy told me about on the bus, but I see no point in going into that. I just want to say that as a writer I don't believe in mincing words. I tell it like it is. My writing has to have guts and realism if I'm to maintain a reasonable amount of integrity. So about two-thirds of the way through, it'll get pretty rough, and if there are any small children in the au-

dience, I think it would be wise for their parents to take them out now. The same warning goes for sensitive people who don't like a lot of explicit gore. I am violently opposed to any form of censorship, although I also believe in adhering to community standards. Not that I think any kids will be corrupted by this story, considering even worse things they can read every day in the newspapers. Say, did you know I once tried to write a children's story? It didn't turn out too great, but never mind. Writers have to learn to cope with occasional failure -- sometimes with the help of a good therapist.

Now, before I go any further, I think this is the time to take a moment to thank those people who have supported me throughout my career and bought my books and all that. You know, being a writer can be pretty rough, and it means a lot to me to have a faithful readership backing me up. I'm sure my readers and fans will understand that I go through periods where my productivity falls off for one reason or another. Maybe you do a little writing yourself, in which case you understand about writers' blocks, although as I said a moment ago, I don't think of my blocks in terms of blocks. Also, I've been taking some French courses at night and by correspondence, so I've been pretty busy with that. I think I owe it to Canada to learn to speak some French. And it helps to follow some of those sexy movies they run on the French channel. I guess you could say that in my current phase I've actually been refocusing my creative energy away from actual writing or realization and toward the conceptual spadework that usually leads to a lot of productivity later on. So with regard to *Jap Scientologists Ate My Grandfather*, I just want to explain finally that although I don't actually have the finished story ready just yet, you can count on my knocking out at least a first draft in the very near future.

A LIKELY STORY

Little Jimmy, waiting by the window, called out to his mother, "Hey, Ma, the writer's here!" The bright yellow van was in the driveway. On its side in black script was written: *Harold Weiland. General Purpose Writer.* Mr. Weiland got out of the van. He was dressed in a tweed suit and was puffing on a pipe. He carried a clipboard and a small attache' case. Several pens and pencils stuck conspicuously out of his breast pocket.

The housewife, Mrs. Bosco, put the last dish neatly on the drain board and dried her hands on her apron. Her father-in-law sat at the kitchen table, dourly nursing a late-morning coffee. Mrs. Bosco reached the screen door just as Mr. Weiland was about to ring the bell. Little Jimmy eagerly opened the door for him.

"Good morning!" said the writer.

"Come in, come in!" said Mrs. Bosco. "Just bring your things in the kitchen." He followed her in. "This is my father-in-law, Mr. Bosco." They shook hands. The old man grunted hello.

Mr. Weiland sat at the kitchen table. He clicked his pen and was ready to make notes. "All right, now, you want a short story, is that it?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Bosco. "For my husband. It's going to be a surprise. He works in a warehouse and I'm sure he'd like a nice story to read after a hard day's work."

"I see. Good. Have you thought about what kind of story it should be?"

She was about to answer when the old man blurted out, "How mucha dese tings cost?" She gave him a disapproving look.

"Ahem, well, I'll give you an estimate once I have all the details. Now then, you were saying, Mrs. Bosco..."

"Yes, I would like it to be a story about a boy who comes from a poor family and wants to be rich. He goes away to the big city and leaves behind the girl he loves. After a few years he becomes successful...Am I going too fast for you?"

"No, no. Go right ahead." Mr. Weiland's pen raced across the page.

"All right. Now, let's see. The boy becomes successful, although I don't know for sure what kind of business he should be in. Something honest, though."

"A doctor? A lawyer? A stockbroker?"

"I was sort of thinking possibly along the lines of upholstery. My husband always liked upholstery. Is that all right, do you think?"

"Of course. Upholstery is fine."

"Now, after he makes it big, he discovers money doesn't bring happiness, and he remembers the girl from his home town, and he wonders whether she's still single or not, so he goes home to check up on her, and he finds out she's engaged to be married to someone else. Only she doesn't really love the new one too much, but he's the only prospect."

"I get it. I get it. And the first one comes back and tells her he was miserable without her and will give everything up in the city if she'll take him back. So she says yes, and they live happily ever after in the small town."

Mrs. Bosco's eyes brightened. "That's it exactly! That's just what I want!" She turned to her father-in-law. "You see, Papa, this man knows his business!"

"Okay, now, Mrs. Bosco. How long do you want the story to be?"

"Oh, I don't know. Maybe five thousand words, if I can afford it."

"For a story like this, it'll need eight thousand words to be done right, believe me."

"Well, I guess you know best."

"And what kind of style did you have in mind?"

"Well, something nice to read. You know, not too hard. Something for an average person."

"O. Henry? Saroyan? Arthur Miller?"

"Something traditional, not too fancy or kooky."

The writer opened his attaché case and spread an assortment of books and magazines on the table. "Have a look and tell me what you like."

Mrs. Bosco looked at the samples cursorily, then picked one up. "This one looks nice. Who is this?"

"Emile Zola. An excellent choice. He's French."

"Oh, well, I don't know...That might be a little too

racy. I'm thinking of the children, you know."

"You have the wrong idea. Zola is very clean. Perfect for the whole family."

"Well, if you think it would be appropriate."

"Leave it to me." He made a steadying gesture with his hands to indicate his mastery of the task. "It'll come out just right. You'll love it."

Mrs. Bosco breathed a sigh now that the decision had been made. She looked at her father-in-law. He in turn was watching the writer reckon his estimate. "Let's see now. An eight thousand word story as you described, done in the style of Emile Zola. Typed on twenty-pound stock -- the best -- with two carbon copies thrown in at no extra cost...That comes to...two-hundred and sixty-five dollars."

Mr. Bosco frowned. His daughter-in-law said to him, "Papa, that's not so bad. The other one quoted me three-hundred and twenty." She turned to Mr. Weiland. "Well, I think that will be all right, if you say it will come out real nice. How long will it take?"

"Oh, about two weeks. These things take a little time, and I have other assignments to do besides." He smiled at her. "If you can give me a small down payment, I can get started right away, and the rest when I deliver the finished story."

"Yes," she said, reaching for her purse. "I can give you fifty now, if that's all right."

"Of course."

Little Jimmy, who had been standing beside the writer, announced cheerfully, "I'm going to be a writer too and make lots of money." They all chuckled.

Mr. Weiland patted Jimmy's head. "I'm sure you'll be great."

Mrs. Bosco saw him to the door and watched as the yellow van backed out of the driveway and zoomed out of sight. As she came back into the kitchen, her father-in-law put his empty coffee cup down with a little bang. "Dey sucka you dry likea leeches! Mamma mia! Two-hundred sixty-five dollars!" He clicked his tongue in disgust. "Everyting's going up!"

"Papa, that's what things cost these days. You want a story written, you have to expect to pay a lot. It's like everything else."

"To makea dat kinda money so easy! It'sa highway rob-

bery'."

Mrs. Bosco cleared the table and thought of her husband's face when she would present him with the story. He'd be so happy. Surely, they were a family that respected the value of things.

Suddenly, there was a faint tapping at the screen door. A little, ragged man with a tool box was peering in. Mrs. Bosco went to the door and, without opening it, said through the screen, "Yes, what is it?"

The little man answered, "'Scuse me, ma'am. Any plumbing or electrical work you want done for a dollar an hour?"

"No, thank you!" she said abruptly, as the stranger turned his disappointed face toward the street and walked away.

A BEAVER TALE

The black-suited receptionist of the International Lost and Found looked up from his desk to behold a rugged-looking man of about forty in a tweed jacket and fedora, puffing furiously on a pipe. On his lapel was a maple leaf pin.

"Can I help you?"

"This is the International Lost and Found, is it not?"

"Yes. Something lost in this case?" he asked, reaching for a white card from a neat stack.

The other man took his pipe out of his mouth and stared intensely into space, his brows creased. "Yes."

"Your name, please?"

"Macpherson McLean-MacMuck, little 'p' Macpherson, no 'a' big 'L' McLean hyphen two big 'M's' with an 'a' MacMuck," he spat automatically. The receptionist struggled with it. "You may have heard of me. I am a leading Canadian writer and author of the book *Delicieux Mets Chinois Pour Exporter*, a penetrating study of the French-English problem."

"I'm sorry, no. Now what is it you're looking for?"

MacMuck blew a cloud of smoke at the ceiling. "The Canadian national identity. The Canada Council is sponsoring my search for three months at a cost of fifteen hundred dollars. But if I do it quicker, I can keep what I don't spend."

The receptionist tapped the white card with his pencil and leaned back in his chair, his head cocked to one side.

"I, uh, don't suppose you can...describe...it?"

"I will know it when I see it," said MacMuck.

"Mmm. Indeed. Where was it lost?"

"Somewhere between British Columbia and Newfoundland."

"Uh huh. When approximately?"

"Sometime after eighteen sixty-seven."

The receptionist nodded, then took a large rubber stamp and pounded the white card with the number 305 in black ink. He pressed the intercom buzzer and said, "Three-oh-five, front desk."

"Any chance you can help me?" asked MacMuck.

"Yes, I believe so," said the receptionist. "One of our

men will take care of you right now."

The author brightened. "Well, it's good to see Canadian writers still carry a little weight!"

A harried-looking young man in a white shirt with a loosened necktie came down the hall. The receptionist handed him the card and motioned to MacMuck. "This is the man, Jenkins."

"Right. Let's go," said Jenkins to MacMuck, setting off at a brisk pace down the corridor. "I'm rather rushed today. I hope you don't mind."

"No, not at all. The sooner I find the Canadian national identity, the better for us all. Ah, Canada, the True North strong and free..."

Around the corner and through a swinging door they sailed, into a room where people were lined up at four wickets. Jenkins went to the front of the first line and said, "This is a three-oh-five." The clerk looked up and immediately opened a cabinet by his knees. He picked up a key with a tag on it.

"...A spirit that touches the proud Nova Scotia fisherman and the brawny drill rigger of the Athabasca, a continent spanned by one great railroad and one good one, captured on film by Pierre Berton..."

Jenkins handed the clerk the white card, took the key, and pulled MacMuck after him, through a side door leading to another corridor, down to the end, around the corner, up a staircase...

"...The magnificent Saskatchewan horizon, punctuated by grain elevators, the call of the moose as it searches for berries in northern Ontario. And those great leaders who made it possible -- Sir John A. Macdonald, Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Mackenzie King..."

Up two flights of stairs, down another corridor, through a large lobby with many windows and potted plants, across an outdoor walkway to an adjoining building, around a corner to a service elevator...

"...Yet, it is not just the untamed grandeur of Labrador, or cosmopolitan Montreal with its tireless union labour. Nor is it confined to the potato fields of Prince Edward Island or the wind-swept tundra of the northwest..."

Down the elevator to an underground garage, across to the other end, through a door bearing the notice *No Unauthor-*

ized Personnel, through a printed matter warehouse, whose workers glanced at the two indifferently for a moment...

"...But who created this spirit, this identity? Or was it here waiting to be found? Should we ask the hardy Eskimo of King William Island? Should we ask the old Ojibway who clings desperately to his culture in a relentlessly changing world? Should we ask Darryl Sittler or Yvon Cournoyer or..."

Through a storage area with high ceilings and dirty windows, then into a dark corridor as Jenkins hit a light switch without slowing down, through a heavy metal door and down a long ramp with an iron hand rail...

"...And when we speak of Canada, can we do justice to the vast mosaic of peoples and lands, from Paul Anka to Jack McClelland, from Ungava Bay to Mimico Creek? Yet, this spirit was forged both within her great borders and on the battlefields of Europe, while today our brave citizens and civil servants..."

Through a cold tunnel with vague machine noises all around, up a short flight of stairs and through a squeaky wooden door, into a brightly lit room empty but for several drop cloths and the smell of new paint, through a sliding glass door with an electric eye...

"...Must remain fiercely independent! For we are not American! We are not British! We are something else! But what? Are we the personification of the stereotypes held by others? Are we the land that Time forgot? Can we know ourselves except by discovering that common essence that permeates each province and glows in the hearts..."

Into another elevator and down to the bottom, then out into a quiet corridor of green walls and brown wooden doors with red numbers stenciled on them...

"...The cashier in The Bay to the steelworker in Hamilton. Each wants to know. Yet, it is something more, something undefined, the track of the caribou, the honk of the goose, the sting of the black fly..."

347...345...343...341...339...

"...Never forgetting the Hutterites, the Dukhobors, the prospectors of the Yukon, a dominion that began more than a hundred years ago, with Laura Secord and later with the Mounties and Canadian Tire, and now in our great political system where each day in the House of Commons our great statesmen and orators..."

...317...315...313...311...309...

"...Giants like Diefenbaker and Pearson and Trudeau, but to the average man the face of William Shatner at a Loblaw's store comes closer to the pith of the meaning of..."

Jenkins unlocked 305, hurled MacMuck in with one good shove, and slammed the door shut. "OKAY, BUDDY, SEE IF THE WILD BOARS GIVE A DAMN!"

About the Author

Crad Kilodney is probably the only writer in the world who not only publishes his own books but also sells them on the street as his sole occupation. He first appeared on the streets of Toronto in 1978 with a collection of stories published as a special issue of the American literary magazine *Lowlands Review*. The following year, he founded his own imprint, Charnel House, under which ten more titles have been published to date. Two larger books have also been published by Virgo Press and Coach House Press.

Kilodney was born in the Borough of Queens, New York City, in 1948 and graduated from the University of Michigan in 1968 with a degree in astronomy. He abandoned his scientific career after a few months in favor of a literary one. His writings have appeared in more than 60 magazines and anthologies in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. He has no formal training in literature or creative writing.

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REMINDER TO OUT-OF-TOWN READERS: Please stay in touch by sending your name and address to be added to the author's private mailing list. You will receive announcements of new books as they come out. All Charnel House editions are limited.

The bizarre satire of Crad Kilodney has made him the most widely read author in several Ontario insane asylums. His name is already a household word in parts of Mongolia, Paraguay, and North York. Among the Ifugao tribesmen of the Philippines, it is synonymous with "rancid pus." His prose style has been compared with that of King Ludwig II of Bavaria.

THE GREEN BOOK is green and rectangular, and it will make fine, abnormal bedtime, subway, or bathroom reading for anyone whose brain has not yet turned into a potato as a result of Toronto's Urban Zombie Syndrome.

"Kilodney is a literary anarchist." -- Charles Mandel,
Books In Canada

"A first-rate underground writer." -- York Univ. *Excalibur*

"At turns naive, bizarre, and violently satiric, Kilodney lays waste to normal perceptions...An unfettered talent at full throttle." -- Richard Peabody, *Gargoyle* (Washington, D.C.)

"Kilodney's prose is smooth and effortless, and his sense of humour razor sharp." -- Martin Waxman, *Quill & Quire*

"A wonderfully funny, supple writer." -- Bill Cameron, CBC

"What the hell's he doing? Subverting our minds with his literate and maddening humor." -- Univ. of Toronto *news-paper*

"My brother's stories are the products of a diseased mind."
-- Morton Kilodney, M.D.